

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-08

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 2722

LIMDIS - NOFORN

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR, PFOR, GR, TU
SUBJECT: GREEK-TURKISH AEGEAN AIRSPACE ISSUE - TURKISH COUNTER-
PROPOSAL

1. BACKGROUND: GREEK-TURKISH TALKS TO RESOLVE THE AEGEAN AIRSPACE ISSUE HAVE BEEN AT A STANDSTILL, ALTHOUGH WE HAVE UNDERSTOOD FOR SOME TIME THAT THE TWO SIDES WERE CLOSE TO AGREEMENT AND ONLY A FEW POINTS REMAINED TO BE RESOLVED. AS A RESULT OF AN UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN FOREIGN MINISTERS BITSIOS AND CAGLAYANGIL LAST YEAR, THE AIRSPACE ISSUE WAS TAKEN UP AGAIN LAST JANUARY IN ATHENS THROUGH DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS WHICH INVOLVED CONTACTS BETWEEN AMBASSADOR TEZEL AND THE GREEK MFA. IN THE COURSE OF THOSE CONTACTS THE GOG PRESENTED A COMPROMISE PROPOSAL TO THE GOT TO DEAL WITH THE TURKISH OBJECTION TO ANY SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO THE FLIGHT INFORMATION REGION (FIR) LINE IN THE AGREEMENT UNDER DISCUSSION, ONE OF THE LAST IMPORTANT POINTS AT ISSUE IN THE TALKS. DURING THEIR MEETING IN STRASBOURG ON JANUARY 29, CAGLAYANGIL TOLD BITSIOS THAT THE GREEK PROPOSAL
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WAS UNACCEPTABLE AND THAT THE TURKISH SIDE WOULD SUBMIT A COUNTERPROPOSAL. THE GREEKS HAVE BEEN COMPLAINING FOR SOME TIME OVER THE DELAY IN RECEIVING A TURKISH COUNTER-DRAFT. LAST WEEK, ON MARCH 17, WE WERE ADVISED CONFIDENTIALLY BY THE CHIEF GREEK AIRSPACE NEGOTIATOR, AMBASSADOR CARAYANNIS, THAT THE TURKS HAD DELIVERED THEIR COUNTERPROPOSAL THAT DAY. END BACKGROUND.

2. THE EMBASSY HAS BEEN ABLE TO OBTAIN A COPY OF THE TURKISH DRAFT COUNTERPROPOSAL. THE FACT WE HAVE THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD NOT BE REVEALED TO EITHER GREEK OR TURKISH OFFICIALS AND SHOULD BE TREATED AS NOFORN.

3. THE DRAFT IS ENTITLED "ARRANGEMENT ON THE AEGEAN AIRSPACE BETWEEN TURKEY AND GREECE." ITS FIRST PROVISION IS THAT THE GREEK AND TURKISH CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITIES WILL DRAFT "A LETTER OF AGREEMENT" TO BE IMPLEMENTED BY THE ATHENS AND ISTANBUL AREA CONTROL CENTERS (ACCS) "IN COORDINATING AND TRANSFER OF AIR TRAFFIC." THEY ARE TO DRAFT THIS AGREEMENT WITHIN A MAXIMUM PERIOD OF TWO MONTHS FROM THE DATE OF SIGNATURE OF THIS ARRANGEMENT.

4. THE TURKISH DRAFT THEN GOES ON TO DESCRIBE VARIOUS PROCEDURES TO BE APPLIED AS "INTERIM MEASURES" UNTIL THE ABOVE MENTIONED AGREEMENT COMES INTO EFFECT. THESE INCLUDE PROVISIONS FOR THE EXCHANGE OF FLIGHT PLANS AND FOR EXCHANGING OTHER INFORMATION ABOUT FLIGHTS OVER THE AEGEAN. THEY ALSO INCLUDE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A JOINT STANDING AVIATION COMMITTEE TO REVIEW IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGREEMENT AND OTHER MATTERS INCLUDING COORDINATION OF NATIONAL MILITARY EXERCISES. ANOTHER PROVISION CONCERNS THE REVIEW OF THE DELINEATION OF THE TERMINAL CONTROL AREA (TMA), AIRWAYS AND TRAINING AREAS "ESTABLISHED WITHOUT PRIOR CONSULTATIONS." SPECIFIC MENTION IS MADE TO THE LIMNOS TMA (WHICH THE TURKS HAVE BEEN COMPLAING ABOUT AND THE NEED TO REDRAFT ITS BOUNDARIES. THE DRAFT ALSO
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CALLS FOR DEFINITION OF A SIX-MILE AIRSPACE LIMIT (IN CONTRACT TO THE GREEK POSITION TO MAINTAIN A TEN-MILE LIMIT)

5. THE DRAFT IS TOO TECHNICAL AND DETAILED FOR US TO PROVIDE A COMPLETE ANALYSIS. IT IS CLEAR, HOWEVER, THAT THE TURKISH COUNTERPROPOSAL DOES NOT ADDRESS ONLY THE CONTROVERSY OVER USE OF THE TERM "FIR" (AND THE TERM DOES NOT APPEAR ANYWHERE IN THE TURKISH TEXT) BUT APPEARS, RATHER, TO BE A COMPLETE NEW PROPOSAL COVERING THE ENTIRE AEGEAN AIRSPACE QUESTION.

6. ANOTHER POINT WHICH RECEIVED CONSIDERABLE ATTENTION DURING THE BILATERAL TALKS EARLIER WAS THE QUESTION OF "SECURITY" OR "SAFETY ZONES PROVIDING FOR NOTIFICATION OF ONE SIDE BY THE OTHER WHENEVER FLIGHTS MOVED FROM ONE ZONE TO THE OTHER. NO MENTION IS MADE OF THIS IN THE TURKISH DRAFT. ONE LONG PARAGRAPH IS DEVOTED TO "SAFE AIRCRAFT FLIGHTS," HOWEVER. THE PARTIES, THE DRAFT STATES, AGREE TO EXCHANGE INFORMATION CONCERNING SUCH FLIGHTS IN THE INTERNATIONAL AIRSPACE OF THE AEGEAN (A) THROUGH THE DIRECT ESKISEHIR-

LARISSA COMMUNICATIONS (OR SO-CALLED "HOT") LINE (REOPENED LAST YEAR); (B) BY SUCH AIRCRAFT PUTTING ON THEIR TRANSPONDER (IFF/SIF); (C) THROUGH USE OF BACKUP PROCEDURES IN THE EVENT THE ESKISHIR-LARISSA LINE FAILS; AND (D) RESOLVING IMPORTANT ISSUES BETWEEN THE RESPECTIVE CHIEF CONTROL OFFICERS ON DUTY. PROVISION IS ALSO INCLUDED, IN A SEPARATE PARAGRAPH, FOR EXCHANGING INFORMATION ABOUT MILITARY EXERCISES OVER SIX-MONTH PERIODS WITH THE PERTINENT NATAMS ISSUED IN ADVANCE FOR THE ENTIRE HALF-YEAR PERIOD.

7. WE ALREADY HAVE INDICATIONS THE GOG IS NOT HAPPY WITH THE TURKISH COUNTERPROPOSAL. WE HAVE AN APPOINTMENT TO DISCUSS THE MATTER WITH MACRIS, THE ACTING MFA DIRECTOR FOR TURKEY AND CYPRUS, AND WILL BE REPORTING HIS COMMENTS. MEANWHILE, WE ARE POUCHING A COPY OF THE DOCUMENT TO EUR/SE AND WILL BE INTERESTED IN THE COMMENTS OF OUR OWN EXPERTS AFTER THEY HAVE EXAMINED IT.
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